

Letter: Mentally ill are not the enemy

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Mental illness is not the enemy. Mental illnesses are common in the United States. Nearly one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness (52.9 million in 2020).

Overall one-third of homeless persons are seriously mentally ill, that means that there are approximately 250,000 homeless persons with serious mental illnesses in the US.

While we live in a society where we criminalize poverty and those who struggle with mental illness (anxiety/panic disorders, depression, bipolar), or addiction, such as alcoholism and opioids.

Our mental health system is flawed; we criminalize those whom have mental illness and jail those who desperately in need of treatment. Our mental health system is underfunded and under-resourced, especially in rural areas. When we speak of mental health system; that includes our state prison system and public education system.

We need to provide our unhoused population who struggle with mental illness/behavioral disability with adequate housing in search of stability and independence. We need to provide those with alcoholism and opioid dependency with clean and sober housing.

We need to reform our mental health system; we need to reform our conservatorship system, conservatees need to establish financial stability and long-term housing; thus proving independent living. We need to

reform the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act; to guarantee patients with better healthcare and to guarantee our community with public safety.

We need to especially expand our behavioral healthcare system in our rural communities; our small towns cannot treat their residents alone.

Our military veterans, LGBTQI+ youths, women and girls who have been through domestic violence and sexual violence are in our streets on a given night. We turn a blind eye on a plague we refuse to recognize.

No human are made to suffer our cold winters and lonely nights.

I am a mental health warrior!

Terry Brooks

Smith River